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## Christianity and Human Dignity

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## **Chapter 55**

### **Christianity and Human Dignity**

Pamela Slotte

#### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the topic of Christianity and human dignity. The chapter opens by acknowledging the complexity of the issue at stake. Being an open-textured concept, human dignity appears in many different contexts and is attributed different, sometimes complementary, but also in part contrasting meanings. The chapter goes on to explore different uses of talk about human dignity and ascertains what contribution it is thought that human dignity can bring and what kinds of meaning it roughly encompasses, including within Christian narratives where it is a central notion. Human dignity is studied as linked to status and relationality, to intrinsic value and becoming, and to dignified manner and vocation. The chapter also considers various critiques directed towards talk of human dignity and which point out the limits to that talk and misuse arising in the name of human dignity. The chapter ends by discussing human dignity more specifically in a legal human rights context. It explores what it is that the talk of human dignity is thought to be able to achieve in that context.

#### **Keywords**

Human dignity, human rights, Christian narratives, status, relationality, intrinsic value, vocation

## **Introduction**

Human dignity is invoked in many contexts: the talk of human dignity, for instance, is central to contemporary human rights discourse. The ways in which human dignity is spoken of in different contexts, however, are not identical. Different settings, including institutional contexts, affect both the way human dignity is understood and how it is referred to. Each framing narrative affords items different weight, and these acquire their particular meaning from the particular context, even if we might want to leave open the possibility of boundary-transgressive elements. Theodor Heuss has called dignity “a ‘non-interpreted thesis’, a concept ‘that is not fixed in its meaning and can therefore marry otherwise opposing views’.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, he finds the concept to be so flexible that it is able to accommodate understandings that otherwise would actually contradict each other. Other ways of pointing at the flexibility of “human dignity” include labeling it, for example, as “open-ended,” “open-textured,” or “conceptually muddy.”

In addition, within the framework of, for instance, the very same religious tradition, the meaning of talk concerning human dignity has shifted across time and space alongside instances of stabilization of meaning. Moreover, using quantitative methods, one can determine that discourse about human dignity has increased considerably during the last century or so. According to Michael Rosen, such discussion has increased since the 1900s, particularly within certain contexts, such as within Catholic thought.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the talk of human dignity is, as noted, historically conditioned. It is often asserted that the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant has been central to our making sense of how “human dignity” has been conceptualized and used. Simultaneously, however, we need to be mindful that the ways in which one talks of human dignity today differ from earlier uses. As Samuel Moyn observes, “In the history of words and concepts . . .

genesis certainly does not account for use (let alone validity). As a result, dignity's functions today are no longer fully controlled by its original deployments."<sup>3</sup> Historical flashbacks, thus, have limited explanatory potential. Historical origins can be dated differently, and as a result a (partially) different history is told, influenced by the narrator's own preunderstanding. Certain historical actors, moments, occurrences, sites, and other nondiscursive or extradiscursive phenomena rather than alternatives are highlighted as important to the understanding of human dignity.

Dealing with the historical use of dignity discourse seems particularly challenging because historians are necessarily embarking on a theoretically and politically loaded project. That may appear, perhaps, to be less critical if all that the historian is doing is identifying the appearance of a particular word in particular texts (although, even then, identifying a non-English term as being equivalent to "dignity" brings with it important ideological challenges). Where historians are not just looking for words or terms, however, but looking for the presence of an idea in human history, then the historian is more clearly likely to come to the project with an already formulated view of what the concept of human dignity involves.<sup>4</sup>

It is challenging in many ways, therefore, to attempt to acquire an overview of the discussion of human dignity. As stated in the introduction to a six-hundred-page volume about human dignity, "The discussion of human dignity raises such complex issues, and the issues that current scholarship now considers central to its understanding is so daunting that we are in danger of not being able to see the forest for the trees."<sup>5</sup> Thus, it seems obvious that this chapter can merely scratch the surface of a multifaceted discussion; this would indeed still be the case even if the aim were only to look more specifically at how human dignity has been formed and how it continues to be a central notion within Christianity.

In this chapter, I assume that the interesting or problematic aspect, depending on which position one adopts, is *not* that we attribute different meanings to human dignity. Instead, I take for granted that it is meaningful to ask wherein the attraction of the talk of human dignity lies, including in Christian and legal contexts, and consequently my focus is to look at uses of this talk of human dignity and ascertain what contribution it is thought to bring and what kinds of meaning it roughly encompasses.

Based on the assumption that “Christian uses” can, and indeed do, look different over time and in different contexts, the aim here is not to establish either “the” correct or original Christian use. Instead, the aim is to identify different ways in which the talk of human dignity can play a role (also) within Christian narratives. I am not seeking to offer a comprehensive account of specific Christian traditions and their complexity, but rather, the aim is to take note and offer examples of certain existing uses. Moreover, my hope is that such examples can focus attention on how Christian use in different eras has contributed to the discourse on human dignity.<sup>6</sup> It is important to emphasize that the more precise distinct theological uses must be clarified by means of an in-depth study of specific discourses and their historical situatedness. As noted, the broader narrative and its components, such as soteriological and eschatological conceptions or conceptions of natural law and practical reason, influence the more precise understanding of human dignity.

### **On Different Uses**

Human dignity is, thus, talked about in various ways, and these different uses are not necessarily compatible with each other. This is so, even though we may think that an important reason for raising the question of human dignity is to allude to something which is shared and which concerns everyone and, moreover, which is done with the purpose of uniting forces in the service of the supposed good. As Bernhard Schlink formulates it:

Human dignity is used as a flag under which people unite and fight for freedom, equality, and decent living conditions that enable them to take care of their needs. The flag summarizes and abbreviates what they are fighting for; respect for their human dignity to them means respect for their freedom, equality, and right to live under decent conditions, no less, no more.<sup>7</sup>

In order to show how talk of human dignity can serve a uniting function, reference is frequently made to the role the talk of human dignity played during the drafting of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). To simplify it somewhat, we can say that in the context of participants striving to articulate human rights in the form of international law, human dignity, with its conceptual muddiness, functioned as a kind of “placeholder” that made it possible to bridge disagreements when parties could not agree on a specific “deeper” foundation for those rights.<sup>8</sup>

Hence, it is meaningful, for the purpose of clarification, to sort out nuances in the (functions of the) talk about human dignity, “the use[s] to which the concept of human dignity has been put,” historically and today. Christopher McCrudden puts it like this in the introduction to his comprehensive edited volume on human dignity:

[T]here are different ways of thinking about dignity: as something institutional (in which case the issue for historians is when the word was used by particular institutions, such as judicially, legislatively, constitutionally), or as a concept that captures a set of understandings (in which case other words might be used to capture that set of understandings, say subjective personality), or we might be interested simply in the use of the word (in which case the word might be used for several different purposes).<sup>9</sup>

For purposes of this chapter, I take as a starting point what Rosen identifies as three typical ways or “strands of meaning” in which dignity has been understood: dignity as status or social position, dignity as an “intrinsic value,” and “dignity as *dignified* manner or bearing.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Status and Relationality**

The first of these strands of meaning is usually acknowledged as the original use of dignity with roots that go far back in time, “the old idea of dignity in the sense of the Roman *dignitas*—the status attached to a specific role or rank in a system of nobility and hierarchical office.”<sup>11</sup> This way of speaking about dignity has a collectivistic quality. It emphasizes humans as being embedded in a broader hierarchically arranged context and holding a particular rank and performing a specific function. Dignity in this context is not conferred equally without regard to status, but rather, dignity differs depending on one’s social status.

Here we encounter what has been labelled an “extrinsic use” of dignity, which denotes “that which belongs to a particular role or individual excellence” as well as the bearing of responsibility in a particular role or position.<sup>12</sup> This use can be juxtaposed with how, today, in a more egalitarian fashion, dignity is raised in certain situations precisely for the purpose of contesting talk that normatively underscores social position. Someone might, perhaps, clearly want to dissociate themselves from any talk of human dignity that connects dignity even partially with “status.”

Simultaneously, it can be argued that, in one sense, a universal, inclusive concept of human dignity is precisely about status, that is, the status as a human being per se. In addition, a social dimension of the concept “human dignity” is highlighted as something fundamental and giving rise to critique relative to its precise design/conceptualization.

In Christian thinking, for example, the social dimension of human dignity takes different expressions, including by becoming intertwined with notions of relationality and community (*communio*) beyond earthly life and with a (Triune) God. Humans are thought to form part of both a social and a cosmic order, an idea that has been formulated in the following way: “This points us to the deeper insights of the Trinitarian *imago*, namely that the dignity of the human person is ultimately grounded in relationality: first to God, and then to each other. Indeed, knowing and loving are relational acts. As well as being a personal reality, dignity must then have a proper theological and social dimension.”<sup>13</sup>

This kind of theological framing makes it clear that, in different ways, discussion of status can follow from the fact that humans are perceived of as fundamentally relational beings. Given the emphasis on relationality, it is understandable that here, depending on concrete interpretation, we encounter a stronger or weaker status dimension of dignity, as well as so-called antiegalitarian tendencies. However, human status cannot be clearly distinguished from social status. The human status is social.

Another consideration is what is thought to be nonacceptable unequal actual social status that needs to be rectified. For example, any talk of dignity as status is not necessarily connected to a notion of subjective rights, or at least subjective rights in the form and scope that we find articulated in international treaties concerning human rights today. Here the talk of human dignity can in itself be perceived as more or less part of the problem (more on this below).

### **“Intrinsic Value” and Becoming**

The history of how dignity has been understood and operationalized is sometimes presented as a development from understanding dignity as status-connected to understanding it as universal and egalitarian, inherent to every human being and independent of the societal roles



they might play. This latter idea represents a second typical way of understanding human dignity, referring back to Rosen and, moreover, an important historic articulation of this idea often attributed to Kant.

To ascribe to someone or something an intrinsic dignity can be taken as an evaluation. It is possible to view the talk of inherent dignity as a way of articulating something about the human being as such (calling attention to an unconditional quality); even so, nothing has been said as to what this assessment is actually based on, what the dignity in question consists of, or how resultant boundaries are—and have been—drawn as to who or what can be considered to have this precise dignity. Different reasons can be emphasized as to why a certain person has this dignity: when, for example, something is identified as being that which lends a human dignity, and this something is (or is considered to be) present to a certain extent in a particular person, this fact is taken as a basis for their being treated differently. (This attribute, in turn, becomes a kind of threshold criterion for inclusion). Critics have highlighted the linking of rationality and dignity as problematic. The talk of an inherent dignity is not necessarily anthropocentric either, so that humans are considered to have a different normative status than other animals and living creatures. Nonetheless, this is a criticism that has been directed against the talk of human dignity more specifically, even though human dignity could be considered to be simply one kind of dignity alongside others. The question of how it is possible to talk of human dignity in a way that at the same time does not devalue the life and worth of other beings and things is important.

When one tries to capture what it is about human beings that lends them dignity, aspects like their freedom or capacity for rational thinking are often emphasized. For example, Kant offers such a view of the particular dignity of the human species. Human beings are the only creatures who can act morally, which they can do by acting in accordance with the autonomous decisions made using their own reason.<sup>14</sup> Hence, human beings deserve respect.

In the Christian tradition a key idea is that human beings or persons have dignity because they are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*). As this theological perspective is elaborated on in more detail, what singles out the human being can be stressed as reason and freedom, among other things. “*Imago Dei* is seen within Catholic teaching, in particular, as pointing in the direction of human beings as free and rational, and it is this that distinguishes human persons from others.”<sup>15</sup> We encounter formulations like this in the well-known *Dignitatis Humanae*, a declaration adopted by the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church on December 7, 1965.<sup>16</sup>

Specific notions of sin also play a role in how different Christian traditions explain theologically what it means that the human being is created in the image of God, precious, free, and with reason. Other aspects of Christian narratives can become topical, too—for instance, eschatological ones that convey a dynamic image of human dignity.

The dignity of the human person has a teleology: the final consummation of human dignity consists in the beatific vision. When seen within this teleological horizon, person grounded in the *imago Dei* is not a static reality but one that possesses dynamism. There is a sense in which the human person is a person becoming through the realization of their dignity.<sup>17</sup>

*Dignitatis Humanae*, among other sources, also makes clear that the idea of inner dignity does not need to be juxtaposed completely against a kind of external concept of dignity (such as rank or status). On the contrary, depending on how the two are understood, they cannot be strictly separated. We encounter an instance of this in the Catholic tradition, where both individuals (persons) and groups and roles are ascribed dignity. According to John Milbank, the Catholic tradition houses both “corporatist” and “personalist understandings” of dignity.<sup>18</sup> Human dignity comes across as both a metaphysical and a social concept.

### **“Dignified Manner” and Vocation**

A third typical way of conceiving dignity is to conceptualize dignity in relation to behavior, action, and agency. A certain way of acting is considered dignified while another way of acting is not.<sup>19</sup> “Dignified” is a designation we may connect with certain behaviors, which in turn is connected to how we more generally perceive certain tasks or assignments. We can think of various contemporary and historical examples, which correspond to the social norms and conceptions of their time.

It is important to bear in mind that to talk of someone or something as being dignified can be a prescriptive, normative statement. Dignity talk can create obligation. Rather than serving (only) as a description of a human being, talk about human dignity can be a way of saying how we *ought* to act and treat each other—including when those concerned are perhaps satisfied with their own situation and do not find that their human dignity is being compromised through some specific actions of others. Again, what follows more specifically from such a statement and call to action may differ, for example, depending on the picture that one paints of the state of affairs and precisely what concrete measures one identifies as being needed at an individual, societal, and planetary level in order to live up to the principle of equal respect for every human being’s equal dignity.

*Dignitatis Humanae* provides an example of a theological formulation of human dignity along these lines. The second paragraph of the declaration asserts that human dignity is based on the fact that human beings are “beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility.” What follows is that human beings must seek the truth, and this, in turn, presupposes freedom from external coercion, including psychological freedom.

This can be taken as an example of how Christian narratives may ascribe a vocational dimension to human dignity. In this context, human dignity is about actively seeking that

which is good and true and thus participating in the restoration of God’s creation. Hence, human dignity may receive what the Catholic tradition calls a soteriological framing: “The ‘soteriological’ dimension of dignity has practical and effective consequences. Again, the recognition of human dignity cannot be a passive recognition. To be effective, it must be translated into structures which recognize and preserve the conditions in which people can flourish—can practice their dignity in the sense of striving for human excellence.”<sup>20</sup> To some extent, human dignity comes across here as a kind of virtue that needs to be nurtured.

Dignity in terms of behavior, action, and agency can be linked to what McCrudden calls a “task aspect” of dignity in an ethical and political sense:

The ethical sense of dignity has two aspects: a task aspect (what we need to live up to in order to realize the demands of our dignity) and the constraints that our dignity places on others. Similarly, the ‘political aspect’ of dignity has a task aspect (the politics that we need in order to fully realize our dignity as persons in community with others), and the constraints that our dignity, as both individuals and in community with others, creates relative to the state.

Perhaps more straightforwardly, this conception of dignity thus entails both rights and obligations.<sup>21</sup>

To talk of human dignity here means to focus attention on both our own lives and the lives of others, and on how we both individually and together ought to act in order to safeguard these lives.<sup>22</sup> The talk forms part of a moral, political, and, as we shall see below, legal vocabulary.

### **Human Dignity and Law**

Talk about human dignity varies, and the different ways of speaking about human dignity are not necessarily compatible with each other. For instance, human dignity can be brought up by both parties in a conflict when stating reasons for their contrasting readings of the situation

and their thoughts on what is required. Does this ultimately mean, then, that talk of human dignity lacks substance? Is “human dignity” simply a slogan that it is relatively easy to endorse? Above, I suggested that talk of human dignity has sometimes met with disapproval—criticized, for example, for being a “miserable comforter,” aristocratic/elitist, and exclusive, including being anthropocentric when used to pinpoint what distinguishes humans from other animals. A consequence of this last approach is that we may end up treating other animals in ways we consider unacceptable when it comes to humans. Conversely, we (also) differentiate among humans. Hence, critics want us to acknowledge the limits to the talk of human dignity as well as any possible misuse arising in the name of human dignity.

[Costas] Douzinas argues that human rights and dignity are historically contingent terms, with significant shifts in their meaning depending on their contexts, and always vulnerable to co-option on the side of abusive power. In particular, Christianity’s universalization of the term ‘human’, he argues, has lent legitimacy to the West’s colonial violence, and this has continued even when human dignity became secularized.<sup>23</sup>

Another critique insists there is no need to talk about human dignity at all, arguing that there are better ways, with “fewer philosophical commitments and less metaphysical pain,<sup>24</sup>” to articulate what we wish to safeguard, which in effect is the substance of talk in terms of human dignity, including, for example, autonomy or equality. Ruth Macklin has formulated a critique along these lines. According to her, to talk of dignity is to underscore the need to respect people or their autonomy in different regards, and she posits that to talk in terms of dignity in these contexts has no added value.<sup>25</sup> Anne Phillips, in turn, maintains that it is fully adequate to talk in terms of equality instead.<sup>26</sup> Moyn offers an additional critique that also points out the limited usefulness of the term “human dignity”:

The time may come, however, when it will seem wiser to coin new terms because disputes around the old ones are irresolvable. I believe that this stage has been reached with respect to ‘human dignity’, since it is too controverted to be available not simply for pristine use but even for meaningful invocation. Like an oversqueezed orange, dignity may have no more to give to any side in a struggle. No concept is useful or useless until someone tries to use it and succeeds or fails; the trouble with dignity is not that it is useless in theory but that the practice of political combat has made it much more so.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, there is a related theological critique that maintains that the contemporary concept of human dignity is a thin and secularized concept compared with the Christian narrative’s rich biblical language and conceptualization of the sanctity of human life.<sup>28</sup> This is an insight worth underscoring, namely, that there is an added value to a rich and varied language when it comes to capturing morally relevant aspects of human and other life.

We also encounter the standpoint that it is precisely the talk of human dignity that is important. We do not live in a world marked by equality and respect for the equal rights of all human beings, and human dignity can serve as a basis for critiquing what is viewed as injustice and, moreover, can be used to call attention to our duty to counter those particular wrongs. What, then, is it that the talk of human dignity is thought to be able to do? What do people think it can be useful for? I now explore such perspectives by means of illustrations from legal human rights discourse.

It may be the case, of course, that we consciously want to express ourselves vaguely, and that talk of human dignity is thought to serve this purpose. This approach can be advantageous in specific situations, as it was for the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nowadays, human rights are called into question in a variety of ways, and thus talk of “dignity” may, perhaps, be thought to have more of an “air of universality” and

thus be able to transcend and connect traditions and discourses. Human dignity may be understood as a foundational concept, as a basis and justification for talk of human rights (being in fact what we seek to protect with the help of the rights in question). At the same time, the talk of human dignity today also functions as a basis for critique of how these human rights are understood and interpreted.<sup>29</sup> For instance, human dignity is invoked both in order to make the point that nascent life is covered by the right to life, as articulated in, for example, Article 2 of the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and in order to defend women's right to make autonomous decisions about their own bodies. Another example to this effect is euthanasia.

How human dignity is understood, therefore, affects the interpretation of rights and freedoms; crucially, the understandings and interpretations differ. As in the examples above, human dignity might be invoked exactly when it is considered meaningful for purposes of drawing attention to the limits to freedom in some respect, but also in order to counteract attempts to limit freedom and autonomy. Talk of freedom (including about how human rights are interpreted) can function in an excluding fashion—for instance, vis-à-vis individuals who, in various ways, have limited ability to act on their own, including the ability to stand up for their own rights. To talk merely in terms of freedom is not necessarily considered sufficient here, nor is it simply about only freedom being at stake.

Talk of human dignity can be a way to seek to capture what we potentially cannot entirely express in an exhaustive or unequivocal way in legal language (a safety valve of sorts). However, we can also imagine that certain rights explicitly aim to protect human dignity in particular respects. Generally speaking, we can obviously also assume that ideas of dignity have held significance and affected legislative efforts and outcomes and the ways in which individual, institutional, and state agency have been circumscribed. For his part,

Jeremy Waldron wants to establish the legal context as a normative milieu for wider discussions of dignity, of the kind that he advocates.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas some may find that talk of human dignity has something to contribute to legal discourse, others specifically identify problems with this thinking. (Human rights) law, to a great extent, is about paying attention to and balancing different rights and interests against each other, and, thus, talk of human dignity can come across as a way of trying to put a stop to this exercise (rather than being seen as a way to bridge disagreements). As Rosen notes, “This need to balance competing claims becomes lost from sight as soon as dignity is represented as an inner transcendental kernel, a core of value that must be protected above all else. . . . [T]he word ‘dignity’ carries the absolutist resonance that comes from its association with the idea of an inner transcendental kernel of inalienable value.”<sup>31</sup> Because of its “absolutist resonance,” the talk of human dignity may, therefore, contribute to the concealment of the political nature of legal decisions, as ultimately such decisions will amount to trade-offs.

Another critique contends that talking in terms of human dignity “smuggles” particular understandings into law (for example, nonegalitarian ones). It may be incorrect to talk of “smuggling in” here, as the talk may be used explicitly with the intention of correcting alternative understandings that are considered erroneous. In fact, in some sense it is impossible not to bring in particularistic understandings. However, the critique lies in what the openness of the concept of human dignity makes possible. Concurrently, it is also possible to argue that the specific legal institutional context has a bearing on the way human dignity is—or can be—spoken of, and hence also successfully strategically operationalized.

For there is a great difference in stating that human dignity is indeterminate in the abstract—in the analytical or philosophical sense—and arguing that it is so in legal practice. . . . [T]here are always structural limits, pressures and



forces that shape and constrain the uses of analytically indeterminate concepts, thus rendering them less indeterminate in practice than an abstract analysis would lead one to believe.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, as in the case of talk of human dignity in religious and theological discourses, law must be studied in context too, so as to get a clearer sense of the ways human dignity is being operationalized and the meanings with which it is attributed, which may disclose false necessities and false contingencies. Context matters, and this includes whosoever holds the interpretative prerogative in specific institutional contexts.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This is where this chapter lands: talk of human dignity is elastic and “indeterminate” in some sense. Simultaneously, human dignity has had and continues to carry actual meaning(s) after all, including by forming part of a moral vocabulary through which our individual and collective existence is conceptualized. Nonetheless, whether human dignity can play all the roles its interlocutors wish it to is another question. It is obvious that we are dealing with a complex matter and a vocabulary whose meaning has shifted over time, and where the readings of the idea of human dignity can be—and indeed have been—both contrasting and complementary. There is a need to examine continually and critically the various meanings attributed to the talk of human dignity, including in a Christian and legal context.

### **Recommended Readings**

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity: An Introduction to Current Debates,” in *Understanding Human Dignity*, ed. Christopher McCrudden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 10. The research in this chapter was funded in part by the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence in Law, Identity and the European Narratives (funding decision number 336677).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Rosen, *Dignity: Its History and Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Moyn, “The Secret History of Constitutional Dignity,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 110.

<sup>4</sup> McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity,” 5–6.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., abstract.

<sup>6</sup> See also Michael Rosen, “Dignity: The Case Against,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 147.

<sup>7</sup> Bernhard Schlink, “The Concept of Human Dignity: Current Usages, Future Discourses,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 631.

<sup>8</sup> McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity,” 2. See, for example, Charles R. Beitz, “Human Dignity in the Theory of Human Rights: Nothing But a Phrase?,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 41, no. 3 (2013): 259–90; Christopher McCrudden, “Human dignity and the judicial interpretation of human rights,” *The European Journal of International Law* 19, no. 4 (2008): 655–724.

<sup>9</sup> McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity,” 6.

<sup>10</sup> Rosen, *Dignity*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Jeremy Waldron, “Citizenship and Dignity,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 327.

<sup>12</sup> James Hanvey, “Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 213, fn. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Hanvey, “Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis,” 221.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork to Metaphysics of Morals*, in *Immanuel Kant, Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 84–85. Kant speaks of *Würde* in the German original, which in English may be closer to “worth.” See, for example, Rosen, *Dignity*, 19–20, for a short discussion of the distinction that is sometimes deliberately made between “worth” and “dignity.”

<sup>15</sup> McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity,” 29.

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<sup>16</sup> Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae* on the Right of the Person and of Communities to Social and Civil Freedom in Matters Religious. Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.

<sup>17</sup> Hanvey, “Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis,” 221.

<sup>18</sup> John Milbank, “Dignity Rather than Rights,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 190–91.

<sup>19</sup> See also Vincent Lloyd, who, in discussing “black dignity,” contrasts dignity “because of a status” to dignity “because of a performance,” performances that challenge domination, including white supremacy. Vincent Lloyd, “Black Dignity,” *CrossCurrents* 68, no. 1 (2018): 82.

<sup>20</sup> Hanvey, “Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis,” 227.

<sup>21</sup> McCrudden, “In Pursuit of Human Dignity,” 21–22.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, the Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* To the Bishops Priests and Deacons Men and Women religious lay Faithful and all People of Good Will on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life, on March 25, 1995; and the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, on October 3, 2022, where all kinds of forms of exclusion, ill treatment and abuse, including structural injustices, are identified as insults of human dignity that require a response.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–31. See further Costas Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007).

<sup>24</sup> Hanvey, “Dignity, Person, and Imago Trinitatis,” 209.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Macklin, “Dignity is a useless concept,” *British Medical Journal* 237 (2003): 1419–20. See also, for example, James Griffin, “A Note on Measuring Well-Being,” in *Summary Measures of Population Health*, ed. C. J. L. Murray (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002), 131. Other concepts, too, are put forward as meaningful in capturing the different uses

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of dignity. For instance, Meir Dan-Cohen mentions “honor” and “worth.” The former captures dignity as social position, and the latter the intrinsic dignity of every human. Meir Dan-Cohen, “Introduction: Dignity and Its (Dis)contents,” in Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, with commentaries by Wai Chee Dimock, Don Herzog, and Michael Rosen, edited and introduced by Meir Dan-Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 3–4.

<sup>26</sup> Anne Phillips, *The Politics of the Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80–81.

<sup>27</sup> Moyn, “The Secret History of Constitutional Dignity,” 111.

<sup>28</sup> Tina Beattie, “The Vanishing Absolute and the Deconsecrated God: A Theological Reflection on Revelation, Law, and Human Dignity,” in McCrudden, *Understanding Human Dignity*, 255.

<sup>29</sup> What is more, in some legal contexts, “dignity . . . becomes a way of expressing the idea of human rights, not so much a *basis* for those rights as another way of describing them.” Phillips, *The Politics of the Human*, 82.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights*, 13–15.

<sup>31</sup> Rosen, *Dignity*, 70, 75.

<sup>32</sup> Ukri Soirila, *The Law of Humanity Project: A Story of Reform and State-Making* (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2021), 73, 81.